

Beyond Green Labels: Assessing Awareness, Economic Impact, and Marketing Strategies in Sustainable Tourism with Special Reference to Karnataka

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Abstract

Sustainable tourism has emerged as a critical approach for balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and socio-cultural preservation. Despite increasing policy attention and certification initiatives, limited integrated research exists examining public awareness, economic outcomes, and marketing effectiveness within a unified framework, particularly in the context of Karnataka. This study aims to assess public awareness and perception regarding sustainable tourism practices, analyses the economic impact of sustainability certifications, evaluate existing sustainable tourism marketing strategies, and develop a context-specific sustainable tourism business model framework. The research adopts a descriptive and analytical methodology using both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 121 respondents in Bengaluru using purposive sampling, while secondary data were obtained from reports, case studies, and industry sources. Analytical tools such as percentage analysis, tabulation, and graphical interpretation were applied to examine patterns in awareness, behavior, and economic implications. The findings reveal that although respondents demonstrate positive attitudes toward sustainability and consider it important in travel decisions, actual behavioral adoption remains inconsistent, indicating a knowledge–action gap. Based on these insights, the study proposes a Karnataka Sustainable Tourism Practice Framework

integrating environmental, socio-cultural, economic, technological, marketing, and governance dimensions to enhance stakeholder collaboration and long-term competitiveness.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Economic Impact, Eco-Certification, Marketing Strategies, Karnataka Tourism, Sustainable Business Model.

Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors, contributing significantly to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. However, the rapid expansion of tourism has also led to environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and increased pressure on natural resources. In response to these challenges, the concept of sustainable tourism has emerged as a strategic approach that balances economic growth with environmental conservation and socio-cultural preservation. Sustainable tourism practices aim to minimize negative impacts while maximizing benefits for local communities, businesses, and ecosystems, thereby ensuring long-term viability of the tourism industry. The concept of sustainable tourism is rooted in the broader framework of

sustainable development, which emphasizes meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the context of tourism, this involves balancing three core dimensions: environmental conservation, socio-cultural integrity, and economic viability.

Sustainable tourism practices encompass a wide range of initiatives, including efficient resource management, waste reduction, energy conservation, protection of ecosystems, support for local economies, and respect for indigenous cultures and traditions. Tourism businesses increasingly adopt environmentally friendly technologies, promote community participation, and implement ethical business practices to enhance their sustainability performance. Governments and international organizations also play a crucial role by establishing

policies, standards, and certification systems that encourage responsible tourism development.

Statement of the Problem

Tourists often prioritize cost, convenience, and experience over sustainability considerations. Without adequate awareness and perception among consumers, tourism enterprises may lack motivation to invest in sustainable practices, thereby hindering the widespread implementation of sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, the economic impact of sustainable tourism certifications remains unclear for many businesses while certifications are expected to enhance brand reputation, operational efficiency, and market competitiveness.

Therefore, this study has been taken forth to assess the extent of public awareness about the sustainable tourism practices and analyze the economic impacts of eco certifications, existing marketing strategies and includes an attempt to develop a framework for sustainable business model.

Review of Literature

1. **Dr. Anita Kumari, Pooja Thakur (2023):** “Sustainable Tourism: A Review of Current Practices and Future Directions”, the study highlights the best practices and the challenges of promoting sustainable tourism through social media, including the need for effective storytelling, engagement, and collaboration among stakeholders.
2. **Maisarah Abd Hamid, Salmi Mohd Isa and Shaian Kiumarsi (2019):** “Sustainable tourism practices and business performance from the tour operators’ perspectives”, the study indicated that both Sustainable Business Management (SBM) and Sustainable Destination Management (SDM) practices impact the business performance of tour operators and the tour operators have reported to have an added business advantage by adopting the sustainable tourism practices.
3. **Loredana, Mirela, Roxana (2018):** “The connection between sustainable tourism and certification systems”, this study has highlighted the

certification process that verifies whether a product, tourist service or an organization meets the designated standards and how the brand is built in such a way that the customers trust the service providers and make it an economic viability for both businesses and the customers.

4. **Nicole Frey (2007):** “The effects of responsible tourism management practices on business performance in an emerging market”, the paper has a mention about which factors influence the attitudes and perceptions of the business managers towards Responsible Tourism Management (RTM) and the effects that these attitudes and perceptions have on the business performance.
5. **B.S. Gunarekha and Dr. Binoy T.A. (2017):** “Community Based Sustainable Tourism Development in Karnataka: A study on Mysuru District”, the paper has explored the regionalized potential related to Community Based Sustainable Tourism Development (CBSTD).
6. **Dr. Shwethasaibal Sahoo, Ms. Mousime Xalxo and Mr. Mukunda B.G (2020):**” A study on tourist behavior towards sustainable tourism in Karnataka”, the study has showed the differences in tourists’ behavior towards sustainable tourism across demographics.
7. **Vinayaka R. Nayak and B.C. Sanjeevaiah (2012):** “Role of Government in Development of Sustainable Ecotourism in Karnataka”, the study has mentioned the role of environmental conservation acts and legalities that has supported the sustainable tourism in Karnataka.
8. **Sunita Jatav (2023):** “Current Trends in Sustainable Tourism in the Indian Context”, the study identifies that Indian travel market will grow to US\$ 125 billion by 2027 and specifies the best practices and the need for sustainable tourism in India’s growth.
9. **Mamhoori A (2015):** “Sustainable Tourism Development: An Empirical Survey of Tour Operators in India”, the study has been undertaken to

understand the perception of tour operators towards various dimensions of sustainable tourism in India.

10. Dr. Zertaj Fatima, Mona Yahaya Aboghebra, Bilquis Banu, Ruhiya Nazneen (2024): “A review of Marketing Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Tourism Destinations in India”, the study critically analyses the proper selling factors, physical improvements to attractions and accessibility and proximity to other tourist sites.

Research Gap

Although several studies have examined sustainable tourism practices and certifications, there is limited integrated research combining public awareness, economic impact, and marketing strategies within a single framework, particularly in the Karnataka context. Existing literature focuses either on tourist behavior or policy perspectives, but lacks empirical evidence linking sustainability certifications to measurable business and regional economic outcomes. There is also a gap in developing a context-specific sustainable tourism business

model framework tailored to Karnataka that connects stakeholders, marketing effectiveness, and sustainability adoption.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the public awareness and perception about adaptation of sustainable tourism practices with reference to Bengaluru City.
- To analyze the economic impacts of sustainable tourism certifications
- To evaluate the existing sustainable tourism marketing strategies
- To develop a framework for sustainable tourism business models.

Scope of the study

The study is specifically limited to Bengaluru City for primary data collection, focusing on travelers' awareness, perceptions, and behavioral intentions toward sustainable tourism practices. It further concentrates on analyzing the economic benefits of sustainable tourism certifications and marketing strategies within Karnataka, with the objective of proposing a practical sustainable tourism business model framework applicable to the state context.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

The study undertaken makes use of descriptive and analytical modes of research as its methodology by using both primary and secondary form of data for analysis.

Sampling Type and Sample Size.

The method of purposive sampling under non-probability sampling techniques has been adopted to obtain primary data.

Sources of Data

Data regarding first objective of the study has been collected through (online survey form) questionnaire and the remaining required secondary data for other objectives have been obtained through articles and web search.

Tools for Data Analysis

In the study, percentage analysis, tabular analysis and graphical representations like

Data Analysis and Interpretation

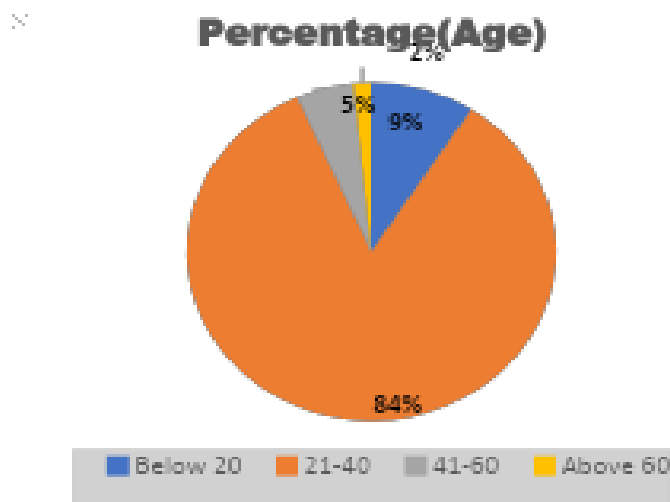
Objective 1: To assess the public awareness and perception about adaptation of sustainable tourism practices with reference to Bengaluru City.

Demographic profile of the respondents

charts and diagrams have been used to analyses and interpret the data.

Limitations of the Study

- The primary data collection is restricted to Bengaluru City, which may not represent the perceptions of tourists across Karnataka
- The purposive (non-probability) sampling method has been used, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population.
- The study is conducted within a limited period, restricting deeper field investigation, stakeholder interviews, and longitudinal analysis.
- Dynamic nature of the tourism sector – tourism trends, certifications and policies change frequently, so the findings may become outdated over time



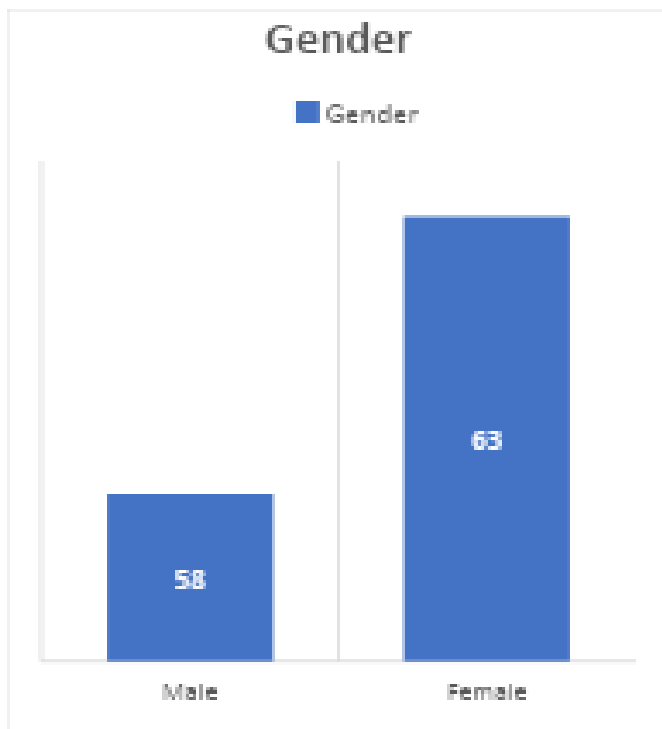
Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Below 20	11	9.1
21-40	102	84.3
41-60	6	5
Above 60	2	1.6
Total	121	100

(Primary Data)

The table presents the distribution of respondents according to their age group. A total of 121 respondents participated in the study. Majority of respondents belong to the 21–40 years age group, accounting for 102 respondents (84.3%). This indicates that most participants are young adults and individuals in their early working or productive age, who are generally more active in travel, tourism

activities, and decision-making related to consumption and lifestyle choices.

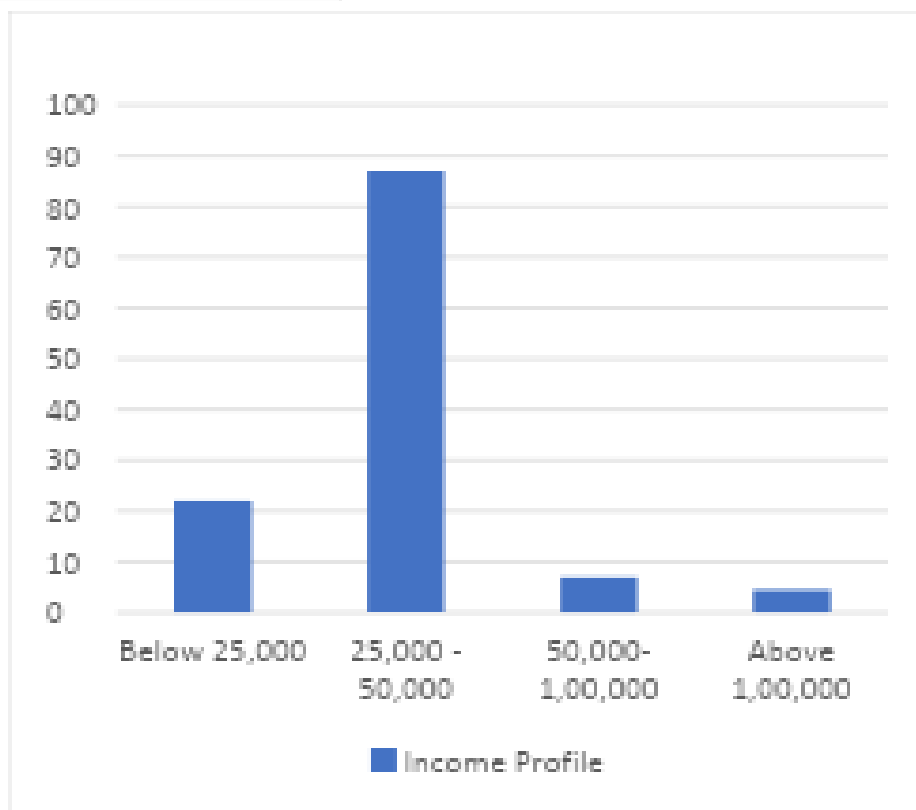
The below 20 years category includes 11 respondents (9.1%), representing a relatively smaller proportion. This suggests that teenagers and students form a minor segment of the sample. Respondents aged 41–60 years constitute only 6 respondents (5%), while those above 60 years represent the least

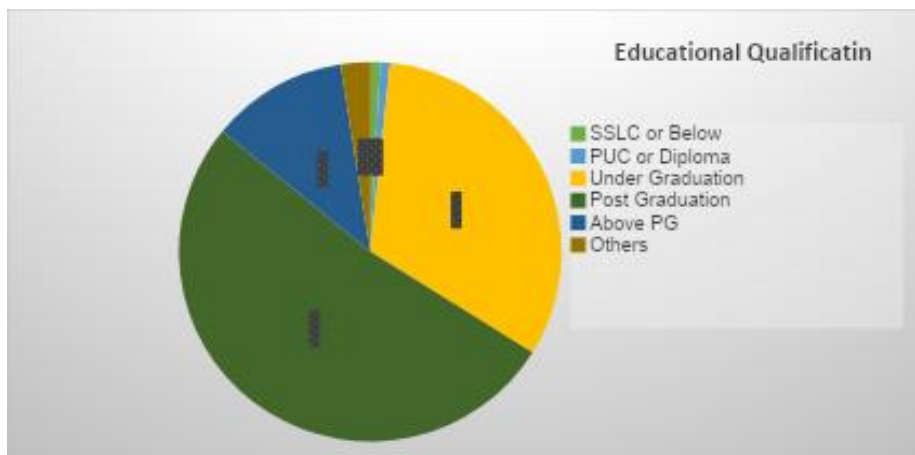


proportion with 2 respondents (1.6%). The low participation from older age groups may indicate limited engagement, lower availability, or lesser interest in the subject area compared to younger individuals.

income profile reveals that most of the respondents fall within the Rs.25,000-50,000 category, while very few belong to higher income groups, suggesting a predominantly middle-income sample.

The gender distribution shows a slightly higher number of female respondents (63) compared to male respondents (58), indicating a balanced participation with female dominance. The



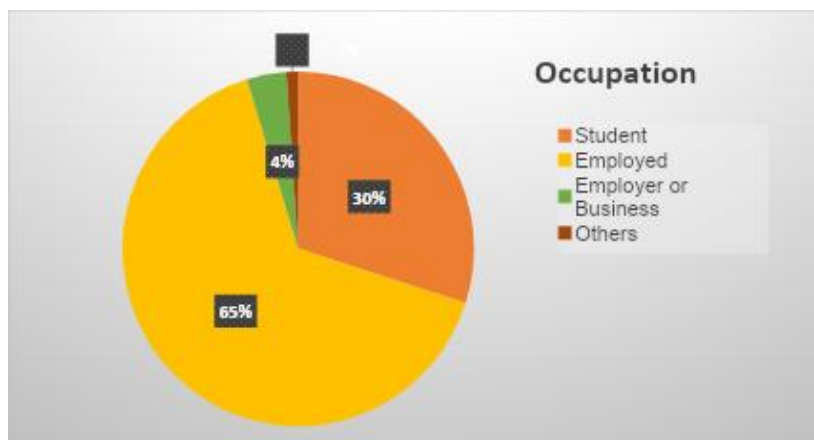


(Primary Data)

The chart shows that the majority of the respondents are Post Graduates (52%), indicating that most participants have a high level of education. This is followed by Under Graduates (32%), suggesting that a significant proportion of respondents are currently pursuing or have completed bachelor's degrees. A smaller percentage of

respondents fall under Above PG (12%), while very few respondents belong to PUC/Diploma, SSLC or below, and Others (around 1–2%) categories. Overall, the data indicates that the study is largely influenced by highly educated individuals, which may positively affect awareness, perception, and understanding related to the research topic.

(Primary Data)

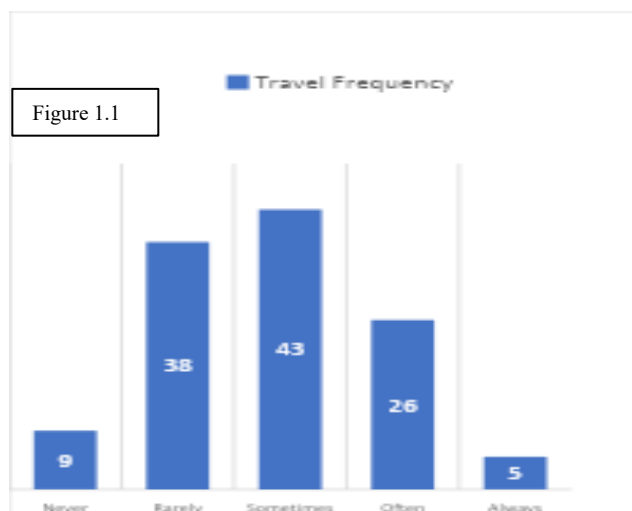


The chart indicates that most respondents are employed (65%), followed by students (30%), while only a small proportion belong to employers/business (4%) and others (1%) categories. This suggests that the study

findings are mainly influenced by working professionals and students, who are likely to have higher engagement and awareness related to the research topic.

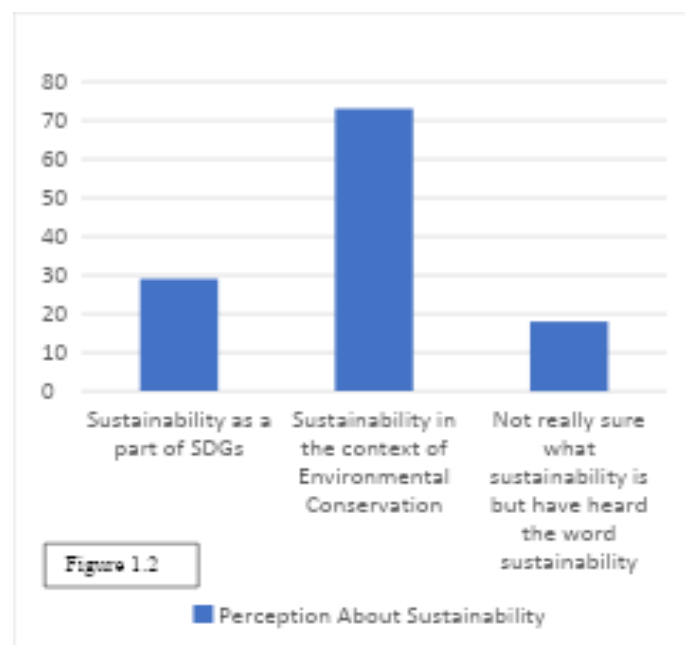
1.1. How often do you travel for leisure or business?

1.2. How do you perceive the current level of your knowledge regarding sustainability?



(Primary Data)

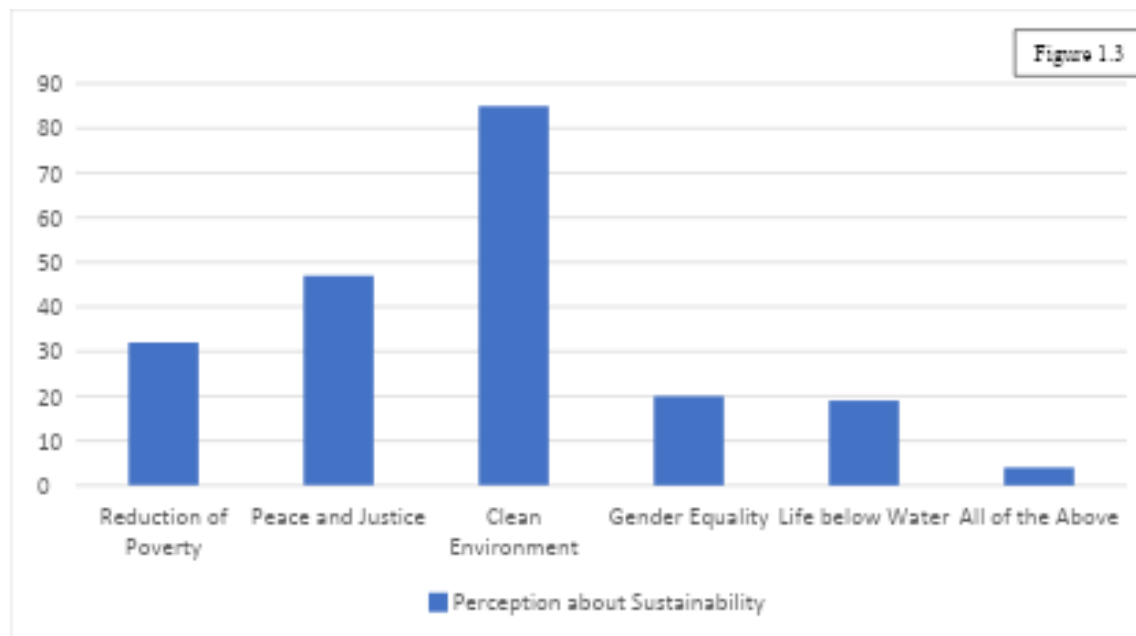
Most respondents travel occasionally, with the largest group travelling sometimes (43) and rarely (38), while very few travel always (5) or never (9), indicating moderate overall travel engagement. In terms of awareness, the majority associate sustainability with environmental conservation, showing a practical understanding rather than a policy-level perspective like SDGs. A smaller



segment is uncertain about sustainability, suggesting gaps in conceptual knowledge despite general familiarity with environmental ideas.

Overall, the findings imply that respondents are moderately active travelers with basic sustainability awareness, but there is scope to strengthen deeper understanding and responsible travel behavior.

1.3. Which of the following words best suits the term Sustainability?

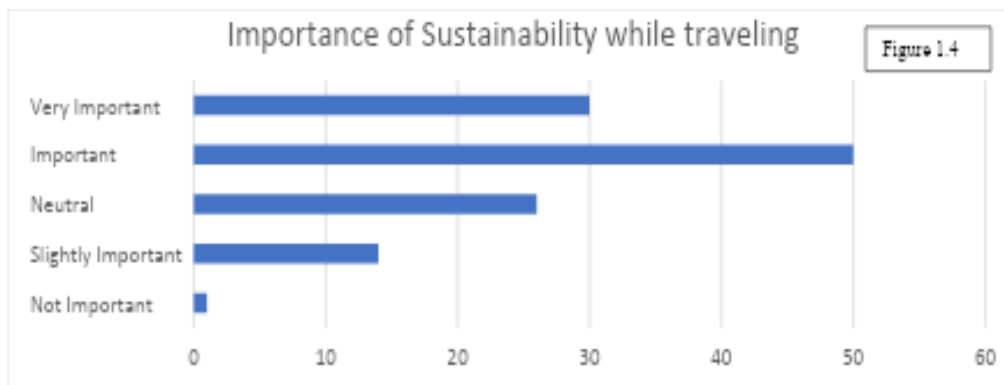


(Primary Data)

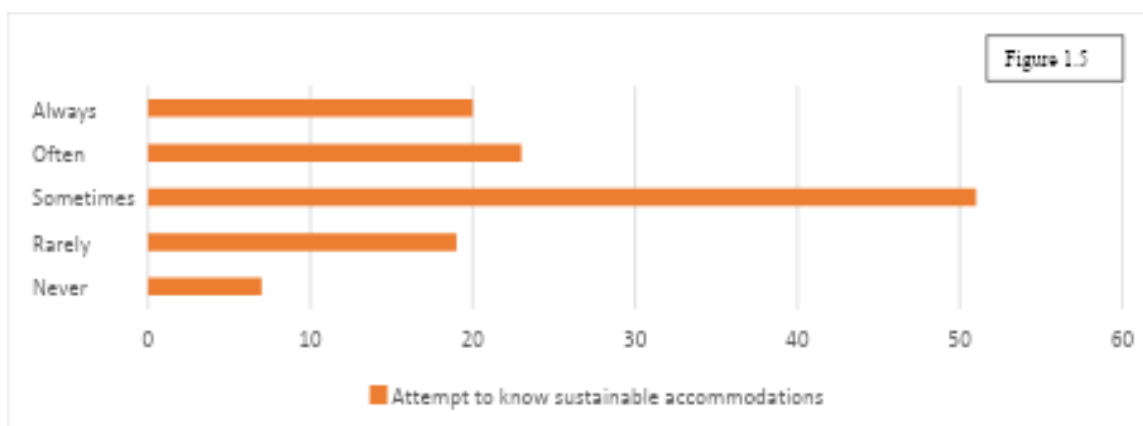
The chart shows that most of the respondents associate sustainability primarily with a clean environment, which received the highest responses, indicating a strong environmental perception of the concept. Moderate responses were observed for peace and justice and reduction of poverty, suggesting some awareness of the broader social dimensions of sustainability. However, relatively fewer respondents linked sustainability with gender equality and life below water, reflecting limited understanding of specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) components. Very few participants

selected all of the above, which further highlights a fragmented perception rather than a holistic understanding of sustainability. This pattern suggests that public awareness is largely environment-centric rather than encompassing economic and social sustainability pillars. Overall, the findings indicate the need for educational initiatives to promote a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability beyond environmental aspects alone.

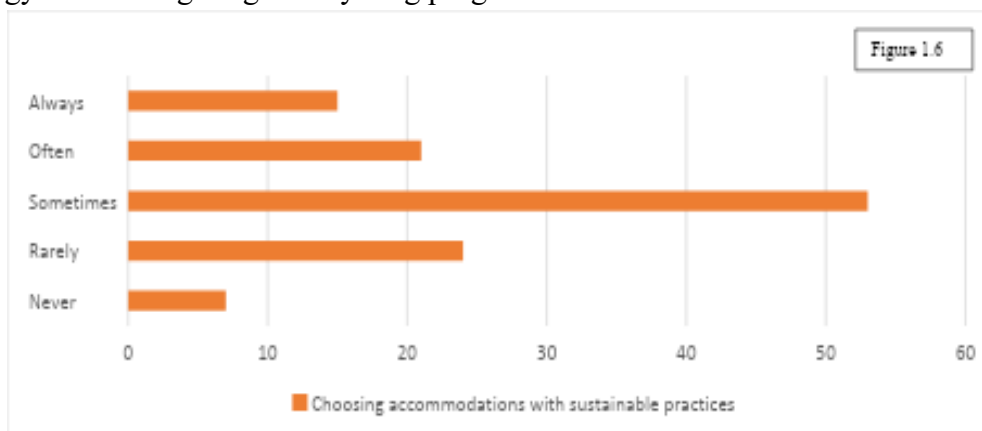
1.4. How important is sustainability when making travel decisions?



1.5. Do you check about the sustainability practices followed by the accommodation providers before bookings?



1.6. How often do you choose accommodations that have implemented sustainable practices like energy efficient lighting or recycling programs etc.?

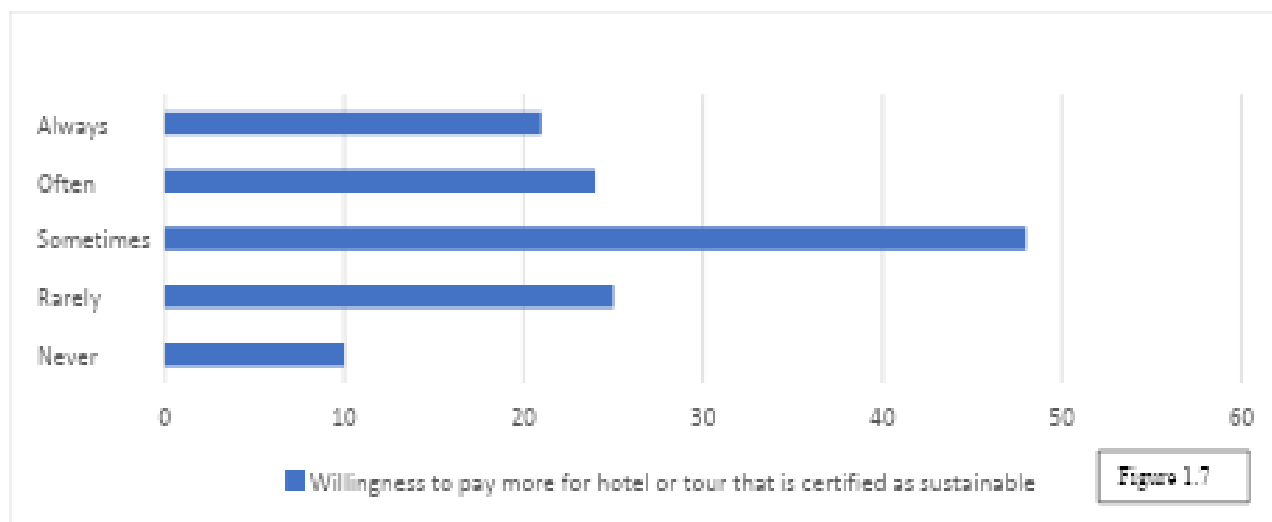


1.7 Would you be willing to pay more for a hotel or tour that is certified as sustainable?

The above charts indicate that respondents generally consider sustainability as important while traveling, with the highest responses under “important” and “very important,” reflecting positive attitudes toward responsible tourism. However, their efforts to actively learn about sustainable accommodations are mostly at the “sometimes” level, suggesting moderate awareness but limited proactive information-

respondents in the “rarely” and “never” categories shows that sustainability is not yet a primary decision-making factor for everyone.

This gap between perceived importance and actual behavior highlights a **knowledge-action gap**, where positive attitudes do not always translate into consistent sustainable choices. Overall, the findings suggest strong

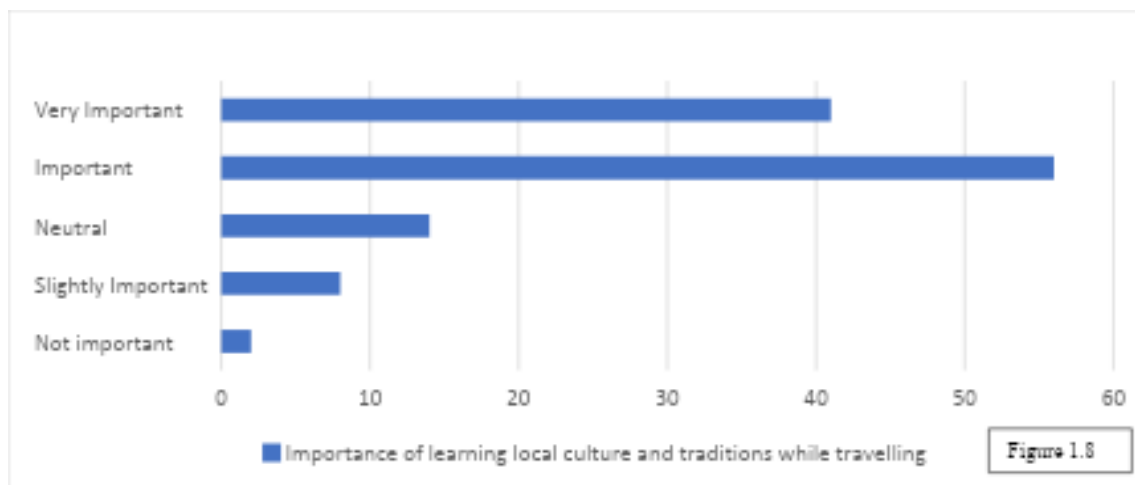


seeking behavior.

Similarly, when choosing accommodations with sustainable practices, the majority again fall under “sometimes,” followed by “often,” indicating occasional consideration rather than consistent preference. The presence of

potential for promoting sustainable tourism, provided there is increased awareness, accessibility of information, and incentives to encourage responsible accommodation choices.

1.8 How important is it for you to learn about the local culture and traditions when travelling to a particular place?



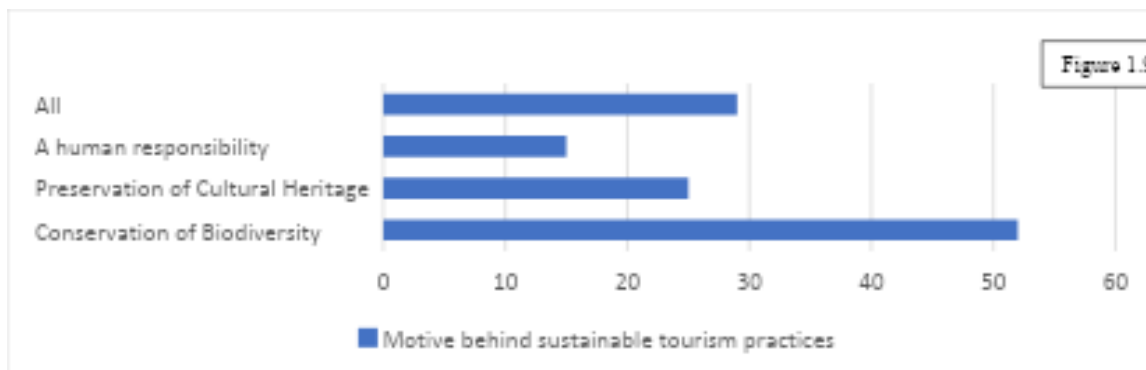
1.9 In what ways the knowledge of local culture and traditions help your travelling?

Majority of the respondents consider learning about local culture and traditions while travelling to be very important or important, indicating strong interest in cultural experiences. Only a small proportion rated it as neutral or slightly/not important, suggesting cultural learning is a key factor influencing travel preferences.

People generally believe that knowledge of local culture and traditions enhances their travelling experience by helping them better

understand the destination and its people. It allows travelers to interact more respectfully and meaningfully with local communities, reducing cultural misunderstandings. Many feel it makes trips more authentic and memorable, as they can participate in local customs, food, and festivals. Cultural awareness also increases confidence while navigating new places and social situations. Overall, travelers perceive cultural knowledge as enriching, educational, and essential for responsible tourism.

1.10 What would motivate you to choose sustainable tourism practices?



People generally believe that knowledge of local culture and traditions enhances their travelling experience by helping them better understand the destination and its people. It allows travelers to interact more respectfully and meaningfully with local communities, reducing cultural misunderstandings. Many feel it makes trips more authentic and memorable, as they can participate in local customs, food, and festivals. Cultural awareness also increases confidence while navigating new places and social situations. Overall, travelers perceive cultural knowledge as enriching, educational, and essential for responsible tourism.

1.11 Do you have any suggestion for tourism operators or governments to promote sustainable tourism? If yes please describe.

The suggestions obtained from the public have been summarized as below

For Tourism Operators

- To enhance Eco-friendly practices like using renewable energy, reducing plastic use, conserving water, and managing waste responsibly.
- Support local communities by employing local people, promoting local food, crafts and guiding so that tourism benefits the local economy.
- Responsible tour planning like limiting the group sizes, avoiding the over-crowded areas, and protecting the natural and cultural heritage sites.
- Educate tourists like informing visitors about local culture, traditions, and environmental

rules to encourage responsible behavior.

- Avoiding the discharge of sanitary waste to the water sources.
- Reduce the availability of the products that are made from plastic near the tourist spot.

For Governments

- Strong policies and regulations: Enforce environmental protection laws and regulate tourism activities in sensitive areas.
- Promote sustainable destinations: Develop lesser-known destinations to reduce pressure on popular tourist spots.
- Invest in green infrastructure: Improve public transport, waste management, and renewable energy facilities in tourist areas.
- Awareness and training programs: Conduct training for tourism operators and awareness campaigns for tourists on sustainable practices.
- Not to allow private vehicles to a particular sensitive zone and instead

make available the public transport facility to reach the same.

- Making eco-certifications mandatory.
- Promote local culture and products.
- Stringent laws and penalty for violating local laws meant for cleanliness.
- Promoting 'slow travel' to reduce carbon footprint.

Objective 2: To analyze the economic impacts of sustainable tourism certifications

India has increasingly promoted sustainable tourism through national initiatives through national initiatives such as the Sustainable Tourism Criteria for India (STCI) and the Tourism for Life (TFL) certification launched by the Ministry of Tourism. According to the Ministry of Tourism (2023)

- a) Sustainable tourism improves destination competitiveness
- b) Eco-tourism projects create rural employment
- c) Certification enables India's global tourism positions

Karnataka is considered one of India's leading states in eco-tourism due to wildlife

tourism, heritage sites, and coastal destinations. According to the Government of Karnataka Tourism Policy (2020-2025):

- a) Tourism contributes significantly to state GDP
- b) Eco-tourism initiative generates rural employment
- c) Sustainable destination management increases tourists' inflow

Wildlife tourism around protected areas like Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park has demonstrated strong economic multipliers, supporting thousands of jobs and local businesses (Karnataka Forest Department, 2022). Sustainable tourism certification also contributes to Community Development. According to United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2018), Local employment increases through tourism supply chain, women empowerment improves via micro-enterprise opportunities and cultural heritage preservation creates economic value.

Role of certification in Tourism Competitiveness

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC, 2022) states that the certified tourism businesses often gain:

- ✓ Higher Customer Trust
- ✓ Improved International Visibility
- ✓ Increased Operational Efficiency
- ✓ Enhanced Investment Opportunities

Certification acts as a quality assurance mechanism, influencing tourist decision-making and willingness to pay higher prices for environmentally responsible accommodations. According to **World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)** Sustainable tourism businesses **report 10-20% higher revenue growth** and its energy efficiency measures **reduce operation costs by up to 30%**

Economic Benefits of Sustainable Tourism in Karnataka

- Contribution to State Economy and Employment
 - Karnataka tourism sector contributed Rs.25,000Cr to the state economy in 2025 and expecting Rs8,000 crore

investment in the upcoming years

- Domestic Tourist arrival is 30.46Cr in 2024 i.e., 56% increase from previous year. This increase is due to the sustainable tourism
- Estimated Rs.3 crore per day revenue loss to tourism

businesses when safaris were suspended

- Rs. 60-70 lakh per day GST loss to the state government
- Around 8000 jobs affected, mainly local community workers

Indicator	Value
Domestic Tourist arrivals	30 – 35 crores annually
Tourism Revenue	Rs. 25,000 crores per year
Employment supported	4+ lakhs jobs

(Karnataka tourism statistics)

- **Economic impact of Blue Flag Certification: Certified sustainable destinations like Padubidri Beach (Blue Flag Certified) attract higher value tourism due to**

- International Recognition
- Higher Visitor Satisfaction and Spending
- Improved infrastructure and safety

Globally, Blue Flag beaches typically experience 15-30%

tourism growth after certifications, which researchers often apply as a benchmark for Indian cases.

- **Economic benefits to Local Community: Sustainable tourism projects in Karnataka generates**

- Rural Employment Opportunities
- Income diversification for farmers

- Infrastructure Development in remote areas
- Support for local supply chain
- Strengthening long term regional economies

Sustainable tourism initiatives in Karnataka generate measurable rural economic improvements:

Economic Benefits	Evidence
Local employment	Guides, drivers, hospitality staff
Women Empowerment	Handicrafts, Homestays
Agricultural income	Supply to Resorts
Infrastructure Development	Roads and Sanitation facilities
Entrepreneurship	Local tourism startups

- **Economic Benefits at Company Level (Certified/ Sustainable Resorts)**
Sustainable resorts in Karnataka (Eco-resorts, LEED hotels, wildlife lodges) community report:

- 10-20% higher room rates compared to conventional hotels
- Higher occupancy from international tourists

Measurable key economic advantages of Sustainable Tourism Certifications:

Economic Indicator	Impact of Sustainable Certified Tourism
Revenue	Higher occupancy rates and premium pricing
Employment	More local jobs and skill developments
Government Income	Increased GST, entry fees, and taxes
Investment	Attraction of eco resorts and PPP projects
Destination Branding	International Recognition and repeat visitors

Community Income	Homestays, guides, handicrafts markets
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(Based on Karnataka evidence and global research pattern)

Certified vs Non-Certified Tourism Businesses

Indicator	Certified/Sustainable Businesses	Non-Certified Businesses
Revenue Growth	Higher	Moderate
Operational Cost	Lower (Efficient resource use)	Higher
Customer Loyalty	Strong	Variable
Market Positioning	Premium Segment	Price Competition
Environmental Risks	Lower	Higher

Case Study analysis of 4 major Companies

<u>1. Jungle Lodges & Resorts (Govt., Eco-tourism Model)</u> Key Destinations include: 1) Kabini River Lodge 2) Bheemeshwari Nature Camp Economic Impact: 1) Annual revenue estimated Rs.100+ crore across properties. 2) Employment for 1500+ people, mostly from local communities. 3) Highest tourists demand due to conservation-based tourism model 4) Good government revenue through entry fees and taxes	<u>2. Evolve Back Coorg (Luxury Sustainable Resort)</u> Economic indicators: 1) Room tariffs Rs.25,000-Rs.40,000 per day stay (premium segment) 2) Occupancy rates higher than conventional resorts in the region 3) Generates significant indirect income for ✓ Local farmers ✓ Transport providers ✓ Artisans ✓ Plantation Workers Sustainability Driven Benefits:
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Sustainability factors driving economic benefits: ✓ Wildlife Conservation ✓ Community employment ✓ Regulated Visitor numbers (premium pricing) ✓ Eco-friendly infrastructure	✓ Heritage Conservation ✓ Local sourcing of materials ✓ Plantation ecosystem experiences
<u>3. ITC Hotels Bengaluru (Green Building Certification) (ITC Gardenia)</u> Certifications: LEED Platinum Green Building Certifications. Economic Benefits: 1) Energy savings up to 30-40% compared to conventional hotels. 2) Water consumption reduced significantly through recycling systems. 3) Premium pricing due to green branding. 4) Attraction of international corporate clients prioritizing ESG compliance	<u>4. Taj Madikeri Resorts & Spa (Sustainable luxury tourism)</u> Economic Indicators: 1) Luxury pricing segments attracts high-spending tourists. 2) Employment generation for hundreds of residents. 3) Supports local supply chain (food, Handicrafts, transport) Sustainability Contributions: ✓ Minimal ecological disturbance ✓ Rainwater harvesting ✓ Waste management systems ✓ Biodiversity Conservation

Thus, sustainable tourism certification produces measurable economic advantages

in terms of higher profitability, premium market positioning, increased employment,

strong local economic multipliers, government tax revenue growth.

Objective 3: To evaluate the existing sustainable tourism marketing strategies

Existing sustainable tourism marketing strategies in Karnataka focus on promoting eco-friendly destinations, cultural heritage, and community-based tourism through digital campaigns, branding initiatives, and experiential promotions. The state government, particularly Karnataka Tourism, integrates sustainability themes into destination marketing to attract responsible travelers. These strategies aim to balance tourism growth with environmental conservation and local economic development.

1. Digital and Branding Campaigns

Karnataka has adopted strong destination branding through campaigns such as “One State Many Worlds,” which highlights the state’s biodiversity, heritage, and cultural diversity using cinematic storytelling and emotional appeal. These campaigns primarily target digital audiences through social media,

websites, and promotional films, helping create destination awareness among domestic and international tourists. Additionally, initiatives like the “My State, My Pride” drone-based promotion project focus on visually engaging content to attract millennials and Gen-Z travelers, leveraging Karnataka Tourism’s large social media following.

Evaluation:

- **Strengths:** Strong visual storytelling, digital reach, emotional branding, appeal to younger travelers.
- **Weaknesses:** Sustainability messaging is often indirect (nature focus rather than explicit eco-certification or responsible travel education).

2. Responsible Tourism Partnerships and Collaborations

Collaborations with private sector partners such as mobility companies and influencers have been used to promote responsible travel experiences and lesser-known destinations (e.g., road-trip campaigns across heritage sites). These

initiatives help promote sustainable travel behavior and regional dispersal of tourists.

Evaluation:

- Strengths: Influencer marketing increases relatability and outreach.
- Weaknesses: Campaign continuity and long-term behavioral change measurement remain limited.

3. Trade Marketing and B2B Promotion

The Karnataka Tourism Department and industry stakeholders conduct B2B roadshows and regional market expansion campaigns to promote eco-tourism, wildlife tourism, and cultural tourism circuits to travel operators across India. These programs strengthen tourism networks and increase domestic tourist inflow.

Evaluation:

- Strengths: Effective for industry partnerships and tourism product visibility.

- Weaknesses: Limited direct communication to sustainability-conscious consumers.

4. Policy-Driven Marketing and Incentives

The Karnataka Tourism Policy (2020–26) integrates sustainability into marketing by:

Providing promotional support to tourism projects through brochures, media, and digital platforms.

Offering recognition to businesses adopting sustainable practices.

Supporting infrastructure like eco-friendly destinations, artisan villages, and cultural experiences.

Evaluation:

- Strengths: Institutional support for sustainability branding and incentives for businesses.
- Weaknesses: Awareness among tourists about certified sustainable options remains relatively low.

5. Experiential and Community-Based Promotion

Karnataka promotes eco-tourism through festivals, farm tourism, bird festivals, rural tourism experiences, and coastal circuits with Blue Flag beach initiatives to emphasize environmental responsibility and community participation.

Evaluation:

- Strengths: Strong alignment with sustainable tourism principles (community benefits, conservation awareness).
- Weaknesses: Marketing reach is often localized and not globally competitive compared to states like Kerala.

Positive Aspects

- ❖ Strong destination branding and digital marketing presence.
- ❖ Government policy support and incentives for sustainable tourism projects.

- ❖ Increasing focus on experiential, eco-friendly, and community-based tourism.
- ❖ Collaboration with private stakeholders and influencers.

Key Gaps

- ❖ Sustainability certification awareness among tourists is still limited.
- ❖ Lack of unified sustainability branding (e.g., Kerala's Responsible Tourism model is more recognized).
- ❖ Limited measurement of marketing effectiveness and tourist perception regarding sustainability.
- ❖ Need for stronger international positioning of Karnataka as a sustainable destination.

Existing sustainable tourism marketing strategies in Karnataka show significant progress, particularly in digital promotion, experiential tourism, and policy support. However, the state still needs more integrated sustainability

branding, better consumer awareness campaigns, and stronger global positioning to fully leverage its sustainable tourism potential.

Objective 4: To develop a framework for sustainable tourism business models.

The Karnataka Tourism Policy 2020-26 establishes a strategic framework for sustainable, inclusive, and responsible tourism, focusing on eco-tourism, heritage conservation, and community-based development. It promotes private-public partnerships, offers subsidies for green, sustainable, and adventure projects, and aims to ensure long-term ecological balance and local socio-economic growth.

Key Aspects of the Existing Sustainable Tourism Framework:

Strategic Focus (2020-2026): The policy targets a 360° approach, while emphasizing safe, high-quality experiences.

Sustainability Incentives: The government provides financial incentives and subsidies

Karnataka Sustainable Tourism Practice Framework (KSTPF) – A Proposed Model

Conceptual Flow of the Framework

for adopting sustainable practices, including solar power, water conservation (rainwater harvesting), waste management, and the use of eco-friendly, local materials.

Segment Focus:

- ✓ **Eco-Tourism:** Development in areas like the Western Ghats, Kudremukh, Madikeri, and Agumbe.
- ✓ **Community-Based Tourism (CBT):** Empowering local communities for livelihood opportunities.
- ✓ **Cultural & Heritage:** Preservation of heritage sites, alongside promoting wellness, yoga, and rural tourism.

Infrastructure & Regulation: Development of sustainable, world-class infrastructure and streamlined, transparent online approvals for projects.

Inclusive Growth: Focus on promoting the participation of women and backward sections of society in the tourism sector.



Environment Sustainability Pillar	Socio-Cultural Sustainability Pillar	Economic Sustainability Pillar
Biodiversity protection in Western Ghats and protected areas Renewable Energy adoption in tourism facilities Water conservation and waste management system Eco-friendly transportaion and carbon footprint reduction	Promotion of homestays and rural tourism enterprises Protection of heritage monuments and traditions Local employment and skill development programs Encouraging authentic and cultural experiences and festivals	Support for MSMEs adn local entrepreneurs Sustainable tourism certifications and incentives Diversified tourism products (eco, wellness, adventure, heritage) Public-private partnerships for infrastructure development

Technology and Innovation Pillar	Marketing and Awareness Pillar	Governance and Policy Support Pillar
Digital Platforms for sustainable tourism promotion Smart Destination Management Systems Data-driven decision making and visitor management Green technology adoption in accommodations and transport	Sustainability branding for Karnataka destinations. Storytelling marketing highlighting conservation efforts Tourist awareness campaigns on responsible behavior Influencer and experiential marketing strategies	Implementation of sustainable tourism policies and guidelines Certification, monitoring, and compliance systems. Destination carrying capacity management Strong stakeholder collaboration mechanisms

The

policy framework is designed to transition Karnataka into a leading sustainable destination by aligning with global standards, such as those from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

Findings:

- 1) Majority of respondents belong to the 21–40 age group, indicating that young adults are the most active travelers and decision-makers and respondents are highly educated, with most being postgraduates and employed professionals, which

positively influences awareness levels.

- 2) Public understanding of sustainability is largely environment-centric (clean environment, conservation) rather than holistic (social and economic dimensions).
- 3) Respondents consider sustainability important while travelling, but their actual behavior (checking sustainable accommodations, choosing eco-friendly options) is mostly occasional, indicating a knowledge–action gap.

- 4) Willingness to pay more for sustainable tourism exists, but depends on trust, awareness, and visible benefits.
- 5) Sustainable tourism certifications contribute to higher occupancy and premium pricing for certified hotels/resorts, operational cost reduction through energy and water efficiency, increased employment opportunities, especially for local communities.
- 6) Karnataka tourism contributes significantly to the state economy with strong growth in tourist arrivals.
- 7) Certified tourism businesses demonstrate better revenue growth, customer loyalty, and market positioning compared to non-certified businesses.
- 8) Sustainable tourism promotes rural entrepreneurship, women empowerment, and local supply chains.
- 9) Sustainability messaging is often indirect, focusing more on nature and attractions rather than responsible tourism behavior or certifications.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- 1) Conduct large-scale awareness campaigns to promote holistic understanding of sustainability (environmental, social, and economic aspects).
- 2) Introduce sustainability education through digital platforms, travel apps, and tourism websites.
- 3) Use storytelling and experiential marketing to highlight community benefits and conservation success stories.
- 4) Target international markets interested in eco-tourism and responsible travel,
- 5) Provide financial incentives and subsidies for tourism businesses adopting sustainable certifications.
- 6) Make sustainability guidelines mandatory in sensitive ecological zones.
- 7) Improve green infrastructure such as
 - ✓ Waste management systems
 - ✓ Renewable energy use
 - ✓ Sustainable transportation

- ✓ Encourage development of lesser-known destinations to reduce overtourism.
- 8) Hotels and resorts should highlight their sustainability practices transparently to build trust.
- 9) Encourage community-based tourism models to increase local participation.
- 10) Support women entrepreneurs and rural tourism startups.
- 10) Promote homestays, farm tourism, and cultural tourism experiences.
- 11) Establish mechanisms to measure the economic and environmental impact of sustainable tourism initiatives.
- 12) Conduct periodic assessments of tourist awareness and behavior changes.
- 13) Monitor marketing effectiveness and certification outcomes.

Conclusion

The study reveals strong potential for sustainable tourism growth in Karnataka, supported by positive tourist attitudes and economic benefits. However, bridging the gap between awareness and behavior, strengthening marketing communication, and

improving certification adoption are critical for long-term sustainable tourism development.

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